

## Hey! Say! JUMP: Exploring the cultural phenomenon of Language in Japanese band names

Lee, Jackson Koon Yat & A.R. Woollock

### Abstract

In Japan, English-language usage in the public sphere, from advertising through popular music, general media, and signage runs a gamut of uses and accuracies from the intentional and unintentional misuse, to the irreverent and the occasional sublime. This paper sets out to explore and record the use of English in the naming of Japanese pop and rock groups. The central thesis of this essay being that Japanese pop and rock group names fall into five distinct categories or phenomena: meaningless names using language other than Japanese, arbitrary names from second languages, bastardised 'other' language derivatives, Romanised Japanese, and mixed Japanese and other language. This grouping ignores those names rendered in *kan-ji*, which although acknowledged, are not specifically within the scope of this research. By deconstructing and analysing this use, it is hoped to contribute to discourse in the fields of both culture (cultural appropriation), and language (language use and accuracy).

### Keywords

Japanese popular music, Japan, English Language, *Wa-sei ei-go*, Japanese culture

## Introduction

Glancing through the racks in your local Japanese music shop or rental store, the native speaker of English will be greeted with an array of Japanese band names which span the spectrum of use and comprehension from the expected and the mundane, through to the questionable and the incomprehensible. As per English in Japanese advertising and media, the rules surrounding language use can be random, arbitrary, confusing, occasionally quite logical, but invariably 'nonsensical in a non-Japanese context' (Meerman & Tamaoka, 2009: 4). The focus of this research is primarily to identify and categorise the use of language, (mostly English) pertaining to band names. By identifying and observing the use of language within the sphere of popular culture, which is by and large the area where new ideas take shape and form most expediently, one is able to observe and perhaps extrapolate out general language patterns, particularly relating to imported words and non-Japanese 'foreign' loan words, Japanese: *gai-rai-go* (外来語, がいらいご). One of the extended functions of this research is, therefore, to act as a linguistic or social barometer for language use in Japan.

This essay is divided into four sections. In the first section, a brief overview of the Japanese language and use will be provided to contextualise how band names can be written. Following this, Section Two will then provide examples of the five linguistic phenomena which have been observed in respect of how Japanese band names employ English, these are: Meaningless names using language other than Japanese, Arbitrary names from second languages, Bastardised words or 'other' language derivatives, Romanised Japanese, and Mixed Japanese and other language. Section Three will discuss the findings of the research, whilst the final section will present conclusions.

## Section One: Japanese, a brief overview

As a monolingual, island nation, the vast majority of language used in Japan is of course Japanese. This 'Japanese' however, takes a number of forms, which are: the Sino-Japanese 'Han' characters, *kan-ji* (漢字, かんじ), and the two syllabaries of *hira-gana* (平仮名, ひらがな), and *kata-kana* (片仮名, かたかな). Whilst both *kan-ji* and *hira-gana* are used in various ways and combinations for expressing purely Japanese words, amongst *kata-kana*'s various functions it is most prevalently used for transliterating and phonetically rendering *gai-rai-go*. Thus, words written in *kata-kana* are predominantly of non-Japanese origin, the majority being English (Igasrashi, 2007: 91, Uchiyama, nd), which as Shinnouchi notes, 'constitute approximately 90% of the total (2000: 8). The host language words can either be transliterated into phonetic Japanese by means of mora derived from the 48 standard characters of *kata-kana*, which are either a vowel (ordered, a, i, u, e o), or a consonant followed by a vowel (e.g. *ka*, *ki*, *ku*, *ke*, *ko*). Furthermore a modified version of 20 specific characters (derived from *ka*, *sa*, *ta*, and *ha*) can be used which employs one of the two diacritics; *daku-ten* (゜) or *han-daku-ten* (ゝ) to provide a more nuanced and extended range of phonemes. In addition to being rendered in *kata-kana* characters, non-Japanese words can also be written in the Latin/Roman alphabet as *Roma-ji* (ローマ字), hence a word the word apple, for example could be written in *kan-ji* (林檎, りんご) or, because it is a natural/biological entity it could be written in *kata-kana* (リンゴ). In contemporary Japan, there is also the possibility that English not the Japanese could be washed through *kata-kana* to give the Japanese approximation *appuru* (apple → アップル). One final possibility is that the actual *kata-kana* could then

be Romanised as *Rin-go*. Whilst historically there were protocols for this, in many cases, especially in the media, it has become something of a free-for-all.

As the above example demonstrates, some scholars (e.g. Chikamatsu, 1996; Sekine, 2003; and Tanaka, 2003) have noted, the communication difficulties encountered when dealing with loan words, can be perplexing for the native speaker of English. In regard to English used in Japanese advertising, media, and music, it is important to fully understand the intended use. For, unlike Grice's theory of conversation, which posits that "the main purpose of conversation is assumed to be the maximum efficient exchange of information" (1975: 47), the function of language use in Japanese band names has likely nothing to do with this objective.

The following section presents a systematic grouping of the five types of (English) language use in band names, and whilst the list is by no means intended to be exhaustive and mostly comprises those groups/artists still recording today, it is possible to extend the nomenclature both forwards to classify new or emerging acts, and backwards to classify acts retrospectively.

## **Section Two: The five uses of language**

### **i) Meaningless names using language other than Japanese**

Within this single category, two different forms of use exist. The first type are those names which comprise genuine English words into a meaningless compound, such as Mr. Children. Although this will be discussed in detail later, for the authors, it is this group which is most problematic because it straddles the intersection of quite diverse arguments. On the one hand it reflects a mixture of Japan's historical lack of respect for languages and cultures other than its own; in this instance, the rules of the second language use are not subject to the strict regulations of the Japanese language. In reverse, such linguistic faux pas would become endless fodder for Japanese TV programmes which thrive on reinforcing both cultural stereotypes and the supposed complexity of learning all things Japanese. On the other hand, however, some of these names represent a stab at linguistic creativity. Groups such as BABYMETAL which is an aptly names Japanese pastiche metal band comprised of young girls. Although apparently nonsensical at first glance, the naming is somewhat astute because it attempts to juxtapose competing elements of a stylistic '*kawaii*' (**baby**) narrative with heavy metal backing (**metal**), hence, baby metal. This originality noted, however, the fact that this is really not a genuine metal band and is highly contrived and superficial in nature is a disappointment. The extent of the artifice is self-evident in that the music is performed by a backing group, with the three girls are dressed in atypical short cutesy outfits, which just happen to be black.

The second type of use, although also meaningless, differs in use as it employs letters from the Latin/Roman alphabet to create new words which, although sounding like English, are in fact nonsense. An example of this second use would be one of the most popular and enduring groups of postwar Japan, SMAP. Although nonsense words, this second group does display both creativity and a fundamental grasp of English phonetics, without which the words would not only be incomprehensible, but also impossible to speak.

Rather than being "foreign" loan words (*gai-rai-go*), It is arguable that band names within this first category are a derivative of *wa-sei ei-go* (和製英語、わけいご). *Wa-sei ei-go* is described as

Japanese-English loanwords (Meerman & Tamaoka, 2009: 4), English loanwords coined in Japan (Miller, 1998: 123), English made in Japan (Meerman & Tamaoka, 2009: 5, Miller, 1986), pseudo loanwords (Miller, 1998: 123, Miura, 1985), and English-inspired vocabulary items (Stanlaw, 1998); here, the authors align with the literal definition “Japanese-made English.” Irrespective of a singular definition, the use of English, in the case of band names is varied and complex, and the table below provides some examples of the most popular acts in this group.

As will become clear throughout this essay, the tension between artistic use and nonsense, culture and language is ever in flux, and it can be extremely difficult to carve a definitive position on use. And whilst the author’s will discuss this in greater detail later, in the interim, however, in the right-hand side of the tables below, the banality of translating the ‘English’ back into native Japanese is demonstrated for those whose interest/critique lies within the realm of language.

※ Note that this is not possible in all cases, and those spaces left open are done so intentionally.

Group name	Translation back into own language
RADWIMPS	
BUMP OF CHICKEN	鶏の瘤「にわたりのこぶ」
Glady	
SMAP	
Mr. Children	子供様／さん「こどもさま／さん」
BABYMETAL	金属赤ちゃん「きんぞくあかちゃん」
Orange Range	橙色の範囲「だいだいいろのはんい」
Mrs. GREEN APPLE	緑色の林檎様／さん「みどりいろのりんごさま／さん」
Little Glee Monster	小さな大喜びな怪物「ちいさなおよろこびなかいぶつ」
ONE OK ROCK	
Road of Major	ロードオブメジャー
Maximum the hormone	マキシマムザホルモン

Fig. 1: Meaningless names using language other than Japanese

## ii) Arbitrary names from second languages

This second section provides the largest number of examples from all five uses, and incorporates three distinct patterns: English words, meaningful compounds, and quasi phrases. In the first instance, the words which form the largest sub-group are mostly comprised of apparently random nouns. Whilst there may be a marketing strategy behind all of these apparently meaningless names, to the consumer this is not immediately clear. It may be that the words were chosen for a number of reasons which might include: how the word looks stylistically when written in English e.g. Exile; the onomatopoeic or phonetic value of the word <sup>1</sup> e.g. speed (スピード), or the familiarity of the word e.g. news (ニュース). These reasons will likely extend out into the other two patterns of use: ‘meaningful compounds,’ and ‘quasi phrases.’

<sup>1</sup>Unlike in Western cuisine, in Japanese culinary circles the sho-kan or ‘mouth feel’ of food (Japanese: 食感、しよっかん) is extremely important as some food is consumed ostensibly for this rather than the actual taste.

Although we name the next identified sub-group 'meaningful phrases,' in actuality here too there is some significant grey area because although some of the groups, e.g., Southern All Stars, sounds both coherent and meaningful the name pertains to nothing and appears to be somewhat of a fortunate choice by the Victor Entertainment marketing department, insofar as it really should be located above in the 'meaningless' section, however it does work linguistically and could conceivably pertain to something meaningful. The other compounds in this section are by and large arbitrary and as per the above discussion, although comprehensible are largely meaningless to native speakers of English. One interesting name within this section is that of Porno Graffiti (ポルノグラフィティ) which is copied from the name of the American rock band Extreme's second album 'Pornograffiti' (1990), a composite which is itself meaningless. The final sub-section, which forms the second largest group is 'quasi phrases.' In this group, the names run the gamut of sappy and saccharine phrases such as 'Dreams come true' and 'Every little thing' to the virtually meaningless, 'FUNKY MONKEY BABYS' and 'BOYS AND MEN,' to the irreverent reclamation of a pejorative, 'THE YELLOW MONKEY,' and finally some interesting word-play such as the title of this essay, 'Hey! Say! JUMP' and '↑ THE HIGH-LOWS ↓' both of which employ some creative language use and typography.

※ Again, the right-hand column contains translations of some of the groups back into their own language.

Group name	Translation back into own language
Southern All Stars	南のすべての星「みなみのすべてのほし」
L'arc en Ceil	虹「にじ」
Exile	亡命「ほうめい」
Perfume	香水「こうすい」
Hey! Say! JUMP	おおい！言う！跳躍
↑ THE HIGH-LOWS ↓	最高、最低「さいこう、さいてい」
Acid Black Cherry	酸的な黒いさくらんぼ「さんてきなくろいさくらんぼ」
Every Little Thing	すべての小さな物「すべてのちいさなもの」
ORANGE RANGE	橙色々「だいだいいろ、だいだいいろ」
Goose house	鵞鳥の家「がちょうのいえ」
CHEMISTRY	科学「かがく」
Golden bomber	金色の爆撃機「きんいろのばくげきき」
THE RAMPAGE from EXILE TRIBE	
GENERATIONS	時代「じだい」
SCANDAL	醜聞「しゅうぶん」
SPEED	速さ「はやさ」「スピード」
Sexy Zone	色っぽい区域
TUBE	管「かん」「チューブ」
NEWS	便り「たより」「ニュース」
FUNKY MONKEY BABYS	
BOYS AND MEN	男の子や男性「おとこやだんせい」
MAN WITH A MISSION	使命がある男性「しめいがあるだんせい」
Back number	
DREAMS COME TRUE	夢が叶う「ゆめがかう」
superfly	
Idling!!!	
Princess Princess	王女王女「おうじょおうじょう」
THE YELLOW MONKEY	黄色いな猿「きろいなさる」
Porno Graffiti	春画落書き「ポルノグラフィティー」
I WISH	私は望む
19	十九「じゅうきゅう」
MAX	
globe	地球儀
King & Prince	王様と王子様

Fig. 2: Arbitrary names from second languages

### iii) Bastardised or nonsense words or 'other' language derivatives

This following short section provides examples which should perhaps be viewed less from a linguistic perspective, and more from a poetic or even artistic standpoint. It seems apparent here that the letters used in this grouping represent less of an attempt to transliterate something meaningful and more

of a stylistic or visual/typographic composition. Either that, or when considered linguistically, a purely vocal (onomatopoeic) frame.

Band name	Translation back into own language
GReeeeN	
SILENT SILEN	
IZ*ONE	
XJAPAN	
M-flo	
Kis-My-Ft2	
J SOUL BROTHERS	ジェイ魂兄弟
E-girls	イー女性「イーじょせい」
UVERworld	
Aqua Timez	
Do As Infinity	
MONKEY MAJIK	
moumoon	
H Jungle with t	
lecca	
KREVA	
DA PUMP	
BoA	
THE BOOM	
Hide with Spread Beaver	
nobodyknows +	
℃ -ute (pronounced as Cute)	
S/mileage	
Juice=Juice	

Fig. 3: Bastardised words or 'other' language derivatives

#### iv) Romanised Japanese

The section below, like the final section, details some interesting naming which can be said to be a genuine attempt to create something relevant, meaningful, and quintessentially Japanese. For the authors it is this area which provides the richest finds, and points towards a philosophy of band naming which is less about pastiche or homage to an almost imperialist lingua franca, and much more towards an autonomous and homegrown creativity which is worthy of much closer investigation. In the short list below, one interesting naming 'code' can be identified which will likely have subsequent incarnations for future groups. That being compressing the name of a place to a veritable acronym e.g. **Akihabara** → **AKB** (pronounced, A. K. B) followed by a number which is not random, but has intrinsic meaning. This linguistic composition should be of interest to scholars of the Japanese language and culture alike because it is not only creative, meaningful, and playful, but perhaps more importantly is not

English. Although Romanised, these words are Japanese in origin. In continuum, this area remains of interest because it is an extension of a prevalent Japanese linguistic phenomenon described below.

Band name	Translation/Meaning
AKB48	AKB = <i>Akihabara</i> [ 秋葉原、あきはばら ]; an area of Tokyo synonymous with geeks. 48 was the number of initial members
Arashi	嵐、あらし = Rainstorm
光 GENJI	( 光「ひかる」( <i>Hikaru Genji</i> - the main character from <i>genji-monogatari</i> [ 源氏物語 ] - Tale of <i>Genji</i> )
NMN48	NMB = <i>Namba</i> [ 難波、なんば ]; an area of Southern <i>Osaka</i> where the group is based. Note, This is a franchise group associated with AKB48 noted above.
NGT48	NGT = <i>Nigata</i> [ 新潟、にいがた ]; a city and prefecture on the Japan Sea.
HKT48	HKT = <i>Hakata</i> [ 博多、はかた ]; a district in Fukuoka City, Kyushu.

Fig. 4: Romanised Japanese (Note that our focus here is on the Japanese naming not the Western numbering)

Because new *kan-ji* are not being made, nor new compounds conceived, the Japanese language can ostensibly be viewed as a dead language. That noted, however, one of the two limited areas within the Japanese language which is neither stultified nor fossilised is that of *ryaku-go* (略語) or *shou-ryaku-go* (省略語) - the other being *wa-sei ei-go*. In addition there is a third area of growth, *gai-rai-go*, although this is not strictly Japanese. All of these areas are important as cultural and social loci, and sites of resistance too, because it is most often marginalised groups such as (young) females and *yanki* (a low caste border community), who are active in these areas - the Japanese demographic with the least social capital and power. In these arenas, the Japanese language is alive and abundant with examples of creative shortenings the types of which were noted above. Notable examples of *ryaku-go* relate to place names, and product names, e.g. Tokyo University (*Tou-kyou dai-gaku* → 東京大学) is most often referred to as *To(u)-dai* (東大) in the same way that Kyoto University (*Kyou-to dai-gaku* → 京都大学) is most often referred to as *Kyo(u)-dai* (京大). Likewise, in the sphere of non-Japanese words, this shortening occurs but in a phonetic form. Because the word in question, e.g. smartphone, is non-Japanese in origin, as a *gai-rai-go*, it is rendered in the syllabary of *kata-kana* as スマートホン (*su ma-to ho-n*). Whilst this word was introduced by corporate Japan as such, the public have contracted the word to スマホ (*su ma ho*). Other examples include McDonalds → マクドナルド (*ma kku do na ru do*) which is now shortened to マック (*ma kku*) or マクド (*ma ku do*), and Starbucks → スターバックス (*su ta- ba kku su*) most often voiced as スタバ (*su ta ba*); the list of such examples is extensive.

#### v) Mixed Japanese and other language

As has been articulated above, this final section is of greatest interest for not only is it the most coherent, but can said to be truly Japanese. Much of the commentary outlined in the previous is equally applicable here and need not be repeated. The point here which needs to be stated is how well developed the 'code' or system has now become. The pairing of a non-Japanese word (these are not



strictly classifiable as *gai-ra-go*) with a Japanese word is, in most cases, rational and logical and checks the boxes of comprehensibility, phonetics, and sufficient exoticism. Beyond this, as a true cross-cultural *mélange* it is an extremely interesting phenomenon both linguistically and from an anthropological perspective too.

Band name	Translation
Morning Musume	( <i>musume</i> [ 娘 ] = daughter)
Momoiro Clover Z	( <i>momo-iro</i> [ 桃色 ] = flesh-coloured or 'peach' colour)
ZAZEN BOYS	( <i>zazen</i> [ 座禪 ] = meditation)
Kanjani eight	( <i>Kan-jani</i> [ 関 + ジャニ ] = <i>Kan</i> [ 関 ]= <i>Kan-sai</i> [ 関西 ] <i>Jyani</i> [ ジャニ ] = Johnny & Associates (Johnny's) [ ジャニーズ ], the largest producers of boy bands in Japan.
Ginnan boyz	( <i>gin-nan</i> [ 銀杏 ] = Nut from the Ginkgo biloba tree)
Komekome CLUB	( <i>kome, kome</i> [ 米米 ] = rice (rice))
Diamond ☆ Yukai	( <i>yukai</i> [ 愉快 ] = delightful)
Fujifabric	( <i>Fuji</i> [ 富 ] = Mt. Fuji)
Sukima switch	( <i>suki-ma</i> [ 隙間 ] = gap)
Wagakki band	( <i>wa-gakki</i> [ 和楽器 ] = Japanese musical instrument)
Represent Chikyū	( <i>chi-kyū</i> [ 地球 ] = earth)
Boku no lyric no bouyomi	( <i>boku no</i> [ 僕の ] = mine [masculine use only]) ( <i>bou-yomi</i> [ 棒読み ] = read, sing, or speak in a monotonous or toneless voice)
THE inazuma sentai	( <i>ina-zuma</i> [ 雷 ] = lightening) + ( <i>sen-tai</i> [ 戦隊 ] = a group/squad of Power rangers)
Houkago tea time	( <i>hou ka go</i> [ 放課後 ] = after school)
Yumemiru adolescence	( <i>yume miru</i> [ 夢 見る ] = (to)see a dream)
KANA-BOON	
サカナクション (Sakanaction)	
サンボマスター (Sambo master)	
三代目 J SOUL BROTHERS (Sandaime J soul brothers)	( <i>San-dai-me</i> [ 三代目 ] = Third generation)
KAT-TUN	
ナオト・インティライミ (Naoto・Inti Raymi)	
Kinki Kids	( <i>Kin-ki</i> [ 近畿 ] = An area in Central-Western Japan comprising Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Nara, Shiga Mie, and Wakayama prefectures or districts)
エレファントカシマシ (Elephant Kashimashi)	
HOME MADE 家族 (Home Made Kazoku)	

Fig. 5: Mixed Japanese and other language

### Section Three: Discussion

Looking at the above examples it is hard not to draw an opinion. Does the above represent

an element of linguistic or cultural bricolage? It is a conscious or political act of *détournement*? Is it playful? Disrespectful, and does it even matter? Do native speakers of languages have the right or privilege to police their own language like the French *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* (General delegation for the French language and languages of France), the Spanish *Real Academia Española* (The Spanish Royal Academy), the French-Canadian, *Office québécois de la langue française* (Quebec Board of the French Language), or the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁、ぶんかちょう) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (文部科学省、もんぶかがくしょう)? The authors would argue against this position citing that, due to many diverse factors including its widespread lingua franca status and its laissez-faire structure, English is one of the few languages which doesn't have some centralised regulation. This, we argue, ensures that the language, as a living entity, is afforded the freedom to adapt, change and maintain its dynamism and relevance. Once it is policed, canonised, or rarefied, there is the danger that it not only loses its relevance and ability to express concepts *du jour*, but that this stultification is antithetical to the very nature of language itself, an inerrant nature which is primarily based on the capacity to facilitate communication on an ongoing basis in a malleable and non-linear manner.

That established, however, language use is never neutral and the Japanese music industry has demonstrated itself as an area worthy of further and sustained examination. In contrast to pseudo-Western Japanese pop music (J-pop) where a *mélange* of English, *kata-kana*, and *kan-ji* are all utilised in a hybrid hotch-potch for naming groups, in the indigenous Japanese popular music of *en-ka* (演歌、えんか) the artist's name is invariably rendered in *kan-ji*. As both Rebeck (2002) and Ishiwata (2001) agree, the euphemistic, indirect, and interpretive nature of *kata-kana* (and by default, English) stands antithetical to the absolute weight and prescience of *kan-ji*. Clearly here, like *en-ka* itself as a quasi mythical musical form with underlying nationalistic tones, the choice of language is intentional and designed specifically to assimilate the cultural identity of the music (and artist) with things Japanese (real or imagined). As female *en-ka* performers traditionally perform in very traditional *ki-mono*, this naming is undoubtedly a conscious attempt to reinforce the Japaneseness of the pursuit and in some ways to distance this from Western inspired J-pop.

To return to the matter to hand; ultimately the authors concur that whilst some of the examples recorded in the tables in the preceding sections are utterly banal, some plainly bizarre, and a few are quite inventive, they are all in keeping with the genre. For, popular music has always, by its inherent and fast-paced nature, been transitory, disposable and concerned with mass appeal; it is an effervescent and frivolous force at its most potent, and this should not be forgotten. Pop music seldom stands the test of time, that is partly because it is *of* a place in time, a marker and cultural reference point for history, it is not a constant, unyielding and unwavering in the face of societal ebb and flow; that is the function of other types of music with a different cycle rate. In this regard, popular music shares with branding and advertising, a use of language which has less to do with substance and cultural norms, than it has to do with capitalism and market share. To that aim, if the use of language (from whatever source) helps frame the music in a particular way, then it is arguable that the function has transcended pure linguistic form and become something akin to information design or advertising. That is, through the choice of linguistic forms there is a considered and deliberate attempt by some associated with the act, to place the

artist/group in a particular cultural, social, or artistic frame (Goffman, 1974), which it might be assumed is reflected in their music; the almost indiscriminate usage essentially mimicking *kata-kana*, with its use being less in a communicative, and more poetic or artistic form (Miller, 1998: 130).

The final point to discuss here, however, relates back to the points noted in respect of *en-ka*, insofar as it pertains to the question whether or not the Japanese would permit the same linguistic theft/butchery/adaption if it were directed at their own language, and the social and cultural ramifications for any answer not in the affirmative. Whilst Japanese scholars such as Suzuki note that native speakers “don’t own English” (1975: 114), the question must be asked how the Japanese might react to non-Japanese doing the same to ‘their’ language, especially given the backlash from Japanese media and citizens to ‘Japanese’ things which are adapted or altered by other countries. The question here being asked is that given the preciousness surrounding the nature of the Japanese language, and the transcendence of a mere language *Ni-hon-go* (日本語、にほんご) to a mother-tongue *bo-koku-go* (母国語、ほこくご), or ‘native’ language, *koku-go* (国語、こくご), something akin to the German *Landessprache*; would the Japanese be hospitable to its use in the way it is to another culture’s language? As Ueda, Mannen (Kazutoshi), quoted in Yokoto-Murakami proclaims, “for us Japanese the national language is the defense of the Imperial family, the loving mother *ji-bo* (慈母、じぼ) of the nation” (2018 :38). Gottlieb (1995) further suggests that the Japanese language maintains the notion of *koto-dama* (言霊、ことだま) the soul, power, or spirit of language, unique to Japanese, which in part explains the prolonged belief in a pure proto-Japanese language. That the Japanese language is directly connected to the Japanese identity, perhaps even the source of the Japanese soul is a position which can be quite easily argued given the attention paid to the Japanese language, its regulation and maintenance both domestically and overseas through organisations like the The Japan Educational Exchange and Services (JEES<sup>2</sup>), The Japan Foundation, The Daiwa Foundation, and other NGOs whose primary objective seems to be to ‘regulate’ and administer acceptable forms of Japanese language and culture. If, therefore, Western pop groups adopted irreverent or banal Japanese for their names would this be greeted by reproachment and condemnation, quiet disgust, sarcasm, or acceptance? The answer to this is unknown, and not specifically within the scope of this research, however, looking at other examples one could be forgiven for assuming that such things would likely not bypass the sniggering ‘talents’ on Japanese TV, who seem ever bemused by the faux pas of ‘foreigners.’ A notable example of this is the almost hysteric way American variants of sushi are perceived by many Japanese as tantamount to culinary sacrilegiousness despite their own similar foibles with other nation’s food, notably Indian and Italian cuisine.

#### Section Four: Conclusion

The reasons behind the use of *wa-sei ei-go*, *kata-kana*, or *Roma-ji* are varied and complex. Given the plethora of examples noted here and those now lost or unrecorded from previous generations, it is impossible to arrive at a definitive reason as to why this phenomenon exist. Whether because English is considered a prestige language (Haarman, 2011); or is associated with a sophisticated or Western lifestyle (Rebuck, 2002: 57), which evokes an air of longing for the moon, Japanese: *nai-mono-nedari*

<sup>2</sup> 日本国際教育支援協会

(無い物ねだり, ないものねだり); or because of an asymmetry of power to the West especially America, following Japan's defeat in WWII (Higa, 1979); whether chosen arbitrarily by record company executives; or because of a certain exotic or otherness, the reasons are many. Although the author's hold their own considered opinions on the topic, it is extremely difficult and perhaps unwise to attempt to reach any ultimate or binding conclusions. The facts are as they are, and in the current post-postmodern epoch using Barthes' (1974) idea of the readerly text (*texte lisible*), the naming discussed in this essay is open to multiple interpretations and readings. What to someone is blatant disrespect for another language, is creativity and ingenuity to another. What looks uneducated or banal to one person, may look quirky and irreverent to another, the list of such binaries is endless and exhausting.

For the authors the most interesting point to note here is that of authenticity. When there appears to be some logic or rule behind the linguistic mash-up, when they are perhaps in true *wa-sei ei-go* form, that is part Japanese and part English they seem to work best; the examples of *kinki* kids, morning *musume*, *Kanjani* eight or *Fuji* fabric, are all fair examples of these. Conversely, when they are random English compounds à la: Bump of chicken, Mr. Children, Mrs green Apple or Southern All Stars, they have the aural ability to pass one by without too much resistance or questioning, as these compounds, although incorrect, sound almost correct. Finally, in terms of desirability for the authors, the least desirable category are nonsense derivatives such as GReeeeN, or 'random acts of English' such as: Perfume, Tube, News, and Sexy Zone. All of which might well have been chosen by blindly prodding the page of a newspaper, and indicate to us that the lack of care and authenticity in choosing a relevant or appropriate name probably reflects the lack of musical aspirations and talent in the group. Besides this, it undoubtedly reflects a somewhat deeper linguistic malaise which points towards Japan as a developed nation struggling to reach even basic levels of English-language proficiency in an increasingly globalised world (Fujiwara, 2018; ef.com, 2019; IELTS.org, 2019)

## References

- Barthes, R. (1974) *S/Z*. Miller, R. (trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.
- Chikamatsu, N. (1996). The effects of L1 orthography on L2 word recognition: A study of American and Chinese learners of Japanese [Electronic version]. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18, 403-432.
- Ef.com. (2019). EF English Performance Index (EPI) 2018 – Japan. [online] Available at: <https://www.ef.com/wwen/eipi/regions/asia/japan/> [Accessed 18 Feb. 2019].
- Fujiwara, G. (2018, November 12). Japan ranked 49th in English proficiency, rated 'low' again : The Asahi Shimbun. Retrieved February 18, 2019, from <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201811120058.html>
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Gottlieb, N. (1995). *Kanji politics: Language policy and Japanese script*. London; New York: Kegan Paul International
- Grice, H. P. (1975). 'Logic and conversation' In Cole, P., and Morgan, J.(Eds.). *Syntax & Semantics*, 3: *Speech Acts*. New York: Academic press, 41-48

- Haarmann, H. (2011). Symbolic values of foreign language use: From the Japanese case to a general sociolinguistic perspective (Vol. 51). Walter de Gruyter.
- Higa, M. (1979). Sociolinguistic aspects of word borrowing. *Sociolinguistic studies in language contact: Methods and cases*, 277-292.
- Ielts.org. (2019). IELTS Performance for test takers 2017. [online] Available at: <https://www.ielts.org/teaching-and-research/test-taker-performance> [Accessed 18 Feb. 2019].
- Igarashi, Y. (2007). The changing role of katakana in the Japanese writing system (Doctoral dissertation).
- Ishiwata, T. (2001). *Gairaigo no sougouteki kenkyuu* [The study on loanwords]. Tokyo:Tokyo-Dou Shuppan.
- Meerman, A., & Tamaoka, K. (2009). Japanese university EFL student understanding of commonly-used Japanized-English (wasei-eigo) expressions. *Bulletin of the Institute of Foreign Language Education (Kurume University)*, 16, 19-40.
- Miller, L. (1986). Aspects of Japanese language attitudes. *Journal of Asian Culture*, 10, 9-43.
- Miller, L. (1998). Wasei eigo: English "loanwords" coined in Japan. *The life of language: Papers in linguistics in honor of William Bright*, 123-139.
- Miura, A. (1985). "English" in Japanese. Tokyo: Yohan publications.
- Rebuck, M. (2002). The function of English loanwords in Japanese. *NUCB Journal of Language, Culture and Communication*, 4(1), 53-64.
- Sekine, K. (2003). Katakanago herasu torikumi: Yomiyasuku, wakariyasui kiji ni [Attempt to reduce katakana words: Making articles easy to read and understand]. *Shinbun Kenkyuu* [Newspaper Study], 624,50-520
- Shinnouchi, M. (2000). *Gendai gairaigo jijoo* [The situation concerning contemporary loanwords]. *Data and Statistics*, 510, 8-13.
- Stanlaw, J. (1988). Englanese: English loanwords and the Japanese language. *The World & I*, September, 522-33.
- Suzuki, T. (1988) "Anglicizing nihongo to forget its 'Japaneseness'", *Japan Times Weekly*, April 16.
- Tanaka, M. (2003). 'Gairaigo' iikae teian ni tsuite [Proposals for not using gairaigo butusing Japanese words]. *Nihongogaku*, 22(8), 50-60
- Uchiyama, K. (2010, January 23). カタカナ語彙表. Retrieved from <http://web.ydu.edu.tw/~uchiyama/data/kata.html>
- Yokota-Murakami, T. (2018). *Mother-tongue in Modern Japanese Literature and Criticism: Toward a New Polylingual Poetics*. Springer.

Thanks. Additional translation for the appendices was provided by MARUI, Hinako and UCHIYAMA, Wanaka.

